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**Re: Support for LD2136, *An Act to Provide Financial Support for Shelter for Unhoused Individuals***

Representative Gere and Honorable Members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing,

My name is Emily Flinkstrom and I am the Executive Director of Fair Tide, a nonprofit with over 25 years of providing housing and supportive services to people experiencing homelessness in the very southern part of our state. I am writing to urge you to support LD 2136 to address the growing crisis of unsheltered homelessness throughout Maine.

We see the impact of insufficient shelter resources every day. Just yesterday, a young, pregnant woman and her partner reached out in the late hours of the evening asking for help finding a warm place to sleep for the night. They called all the emergency shelters from Portsmouth, New Hampshire to Portland, Maine and were met with the same response: we are at capacity. The temperature was not low enough to trigger an opening of the warming centers, yet it was certainly cold enough to make sleeping outside an unsafe and impractical option. This is just one example of the estimated 300 people currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness in York County alone.

As a member of the Statewide Homeless Council, I hear similar stories from homeless providers in every corner of Maine. One of the most difficult and heart-wrenching aspects of working in this field is telling an individual, or a family, that there are no options for shelter, and sending them off with a sleeping bag.

Our ultimate goal as a State should be to ensure access to permanent, stable and affordable housing for all Mainers. With that, we must recognize the critical role that emergency shelters play in the housing continuum. Through providing the safety and comfort of a warm bed and hot meal, shelter providers are able to connect with individuals and work on long-term plans for stability. Please support LD 2136 so our shelters can continue to play this life-saving role, and expand their capacity to meet the increasing need.

Thank you for all the work you have done, and continue to do, to address the housing crisis in our state.

With appreciation,

Emily Flinkstrom, MSW  
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